



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

CURON MEDICAL IMPROVES CUSTOMER SERVICE AND REDUCES COSTS WITH CISCO IP COMMUNICATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- Curon Medical

INDUSTRY

- Healthcare

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Shorten response times for patients, doctors, and hospitals seeking information
- Reduce telecommunications cost and administrative burden

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco IP Communications solution

BUSINESS VALUE

- Enhanced, flexible voice service has improved customer service and productivity
- Total cost of ownership savings of \$2000 a month
- Simplified administration and maintenance easily accommodates a growing company

Curon Medical reached its business goals of better customer service and reduced costs with the help of Covad Communications, Allnet Services, and Cisco Systems®. The Covad VoIP business-class service, combined with Allnet’s service and support, has enhanced Curon’s productivity through improved internal communications and simplified network administration.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Founded in 1997, Curon Medical develops, manufactures, and markets innovative, proprietary products for the treatment of gastrointestinal disorders. With almost 70 employees headquartered in Fremont, California, Curon also has an office in Belgium and distributors throughout the world.

Patients with gastrointestinal disorders are often in severe discomfort; patients and doctors alike want to avoid any unnecessary delays in treatment. One of Curon’s business goals was to be always available to answer questions from distributors, patients, hospitals, or physicians, but Curon’s legacy private branch exchange (PBX) telephone system lacked many features required in today’s connected world. The phone system was unable to notify Curon employees immediately of incoming voicemail messages, and when sales or service staff were traveling, they could not be paged or e-mailed with notification of missed calls. As a result, hours or sometimes days could pass before calls were returned.

As Curon grew, it found that its telephone system did not grow easily and in step with the company. Installing a new line was an administrative and logistical challenge, requiring Curon’s IT administrator to contact as many as three different vendors to complete this task—one vendor to run a new telephone cable to the office, one to program the telephone, and one for service or maintenance. “We are a small company with a one-person IT department,” explains John Vigdal, director of information systems for Curon. “We needed a reliable system that was simple to maintain.”

On top of the growing dissatisfaction with the PBX system, Curon received multiple telephone bills for its Fremont-based local, long-distance, and 800-number calls, as well as long-distance costs incurred by the Belgian branch office. Curon realized it could be saving money by consolidating telephone services, and decided to evaluate several options before moving company headquarters to a new, larger facility. One technology option considered was voice over IP (VoIP).

NETWORK SOLUTION

Curon chose Covad Communications to deliver a managed, business-class IP Communications service to all of its locations. Covad is a leading U.S. provider of integrated voice and data services, specializing in the small and medium-sized business (SMB) market. Covad VoIP business-class service, offered in more than 100 metropolitan areas throughout the United States, recently earned a Cisco Powered Network designation. Curon was impressed by the reliability and reach of the Covad managed service. “When Covad explained that the networking equipment would

not be in our facility, we realized that was the perfect solution,” says Vigdal. “No Curon employee would have to worry about maintaining a critical piece of equipment.”

Covad VoIP business-class service replaced the need for a traditional PBX or key system. Since Covad provides dial tone to its customers, Covad is responsible for providing and maintaining a highly reliable network that prioritizes voice traffic. “The only way to deliver on our promise of truly business-class voice service is to standardize on the best equipment, which includes Cisco at the core,” says Andrew Pryfogle, regional director of the western United States for Covad. “Our small and medium-sized business customers have a very high regard for Cisco.”

Covad VoIP runs on a completely managed private infrastructure. All equipment, with the exception of the IP phones, resides at secure Covad facilities that are monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. “The Cisco routers and phones at the edge, switches and media gateways at the core, and our management of the network allow us to prioritize the voice traffic,” explains Pryfogle. “If there’s ever any congestion, voice quality isn’t compromised. That’s one benefit of a Cisco Powered Network.”

“I would say to other small companies, ‘Throw the PBX out the window.’ A managed VoIP service is the only way to go. In my experience, the features and reliability are unsurpassed.”

—John Vigdal, Director of Information Systems, Curon Medical

Once Curon made its decision, the company turned to Allnet Services for the design, installation, project management, and training for the network upgrade. Bakersfield, California-based Allnet is a Covad Authorized Dealer and Cisco Registered Partner. Founded in 1998, Allnet provides installation, maintenance, training, and support for voice and data communications systems. Since its inception, Allnet has managed more than 125 successful VoIP integrations. Allnet consulted with Curon to design a system that would fulfill Curon’s voice and data communications needs now and in the future. “Curon’s initial pain point was the voice system,” explains Russ Wilkins, CEO, Allnet Services. “We offered them a Cisco integrated voice and data solution that cost less than their previous voice budget. They got all the features and connectivity for both the voice and data network, with the added benefit of an excellent return on investment (ROI).”

At Curon’s new company headquarters in Fremont, Allnet replaced Curon’s PBX with a 100-Mbps Ethernet LAN, featuring a Cisco Catalyst® 3550 PWR XL Switch that provides high-speed voice and data connectivity. Cisco 7960G IP phones were installed quickly and cost-effectively in each office, thanks to the Power over Ethernet feature of the Cisco Catalyst 3524 PWR XL. Supplying power to the IP phones via the Ethernet cable greatly simplifies installation—the phones no longer require power outlets, and can be placed anywhere there are data ports.

Powerful quality of service (QoS) features embedded in the Cisco 2600 router enable Curon to prioritize voice and other critical applications while preserving data privacy, integrity, and authenticity. In the Belgian office, Cisco IP phones plug into a broadband modem, enabling European employees to use four-digit dialing to Curon headquarters. With the voice and data network installation completed in a single day, Allnet turned its attention to training Curon’s IT administrator and employees. The IT administrator became familiar with the new system via an online tutorial, while Allnet ran an onsite training course for Curon employees on their new phones. Only 45 days after first meeting with Covad and Allnet, Curon Medical had a fully operational voice and data network.

BUSINESS VALUE

Covad VoIP business-class service and the Cisco products installed by Allnet have enabled Curon to meet its business goal of always being available and responsive to their customers. Curon staff are accessible, regardless of location, through their four-digit extensions. Traveling employees no longer miss calls, but instead have them forwarded automatically to their cellular phones. Employees can scroll through, listen to, read, and fax their voice messages from their computers. They respond to the most critical messages first, enhancing their productivity. The Curon senior management team has Cisco IP phones at home with “find me, follow me” features, so they can be reached day or night, in case of an emergency.

Curon internal communications have also been enhanced. “To reach our facility in Belgium, we simply dial a four-digit extension,” says Vigdal. “The Belgian employees feel more a part of Curon. It’s made a vast improvement in their morale.”

Curon has discovered that its new Cisco data network also contributes to organizational productivity. “With our previous system, people used to wait for the network to respond,” explains Vigdal. “Now, people can do their research faster, get their e-mails faster. They just get more done.”

Unsurpassed Reliability

Covad VoIP has exceeded Curon’s expectations for reliability. “I would say to other small companies, ‘throw the PBX out the window.’ A managed VoIP service is the only way to go,” says Vigdal. “In my experience, the features and reliability are unsurpassed.”

Reduced Costs

From the day it was installed, Covad VoIP business-class service started saving Curon money, producing a ROI within months. “Initially, we thought a managed VoIP solution would be out of our price range, but it was actually less expensive than our old phone system—plus it saves us close to \$2000 a month in telecommunications charges,” explains Vigdal. “We realized it would pay for itself in no time, and it has.” Aside from reducing telecommunications charges, the managed solution has dramatically reduced the administrative burden of Curon’s voice network, resulting in “soft” cost savings. “Whatever we need—another phone or line or 800 number—it’s one call to Allnet,” says Vigdal.

Covad VoIP easily accommodates a growing company. Instead of calling a technician to deal with wires and cables, Cisco IP phones simply plug into existing data ports in each cubicle. To move a phone, an employee just unplugs it and moves it into another data port. The system automatically recognizes that the phone has moved and reroutes the calls appropriately. Phones can even be located offsite.

Curon has found the Cisco IP phones not only simple to install, but also easy to use. “The biggest challenge for our employees was picking out which ring tones they wanted,” laughs Vigdal.

NEXT STEPS

As an organization in the healthcare industry, Curon Medical understands that technology will play a central role in improving quality of care over the next decade. “As an IT manager, I look at both the future of our business here at Curon Medical, and the future of voice and data communications,” says Vigdal. “For Curon, partnered with Cisco, Covad, and Allnet, the future looks unlimited.”

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This customer story is based on information provided by Covad Communications, Allnet Services, and Curon Medical and describes how a particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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